

Honorable Julius Genachowski, Chairman

Commissioner Michael J. Copps

Commissioner Robert M. McDowell

Commissioner Mignon Clyburn

Commissioner Meredith Attwell Baker

Federal Communications Commission

445 Twelfth Street SW

Washington, DC 20554

Re: CG Docket Nos. 03-123 and 10-51

Dear Chairman Genachowski and Commissioners Copps, McDowell, Clyburn, and Baker,

I am sending this letter as written by a friend of mine because I couldn't have worded-it better if I tried! As a former interpreter, I have had first-hand experience with the deaf community, and I know how important this issues is to them!! Please, please do not let this large portion of our communities down! Think about the consequences of this proposed matter on the deaf and on the industry as well!!! Thank You.....read on ahead: Sandra K. Rule:

"As a Child of Deaf Adults (CODA) and a user of Video Relay Service (VRS), I have the great fortune of communicating with my parents, several family members, friends and other deaf individuals by phone in American Sign Language, their native language, using VRS. I have seen first-hand that this life-altering broadband service is a vital link that connects deaf people to the hearing community in too many ways to mention.

"Ensuring that deaf individuals have access to VRS and encouraging improvements in VRS should be a high priority for you as Chairman and Commissioners of the Federal Communications Commission (FCC). The Americans with Disabilities Act (ADA) requires the FCC to make available to all deaf individuals nationwide functionally-equivalent communications.

"You will soon determine the future of VRS. When you set the VRS rate, you will determine whether America makes progress toward the statutory goals of functional equivalence, nationwide access and inclusion or force deaf users to revert to TTY communications. And, you will determine whether VRS fulfills its potential to drive broadband adoption by the deaf, even in the face of poverty and isolation.

"I was deeply disturbed to see the Commission's recent Public Notice on VRS rates. These proposals would put an end to VRS as we know it. The VRS company that I use, Sorenson VRS, has been committed to providing the highest quality Video Relay Service to our Deaf communities. (TRUE!! S.K.R.) They have gone far above the requirements of the FCC to give quality service and training. (TRUE!! S.K.R.) If these proposed rates are adopted, Sorenson VRS company would head into bankruptcy, hence the ripple effect to the other VRS providers who are not equipped or able to handle the volume of calls and will fold as well. This would be disastrous for deaf VRS users and communities! This great loss would also impact the families of the Deaf communities as well as causing countless employees to lose their jobs, in turn effecting the economy.

"The FCC should be increasing the availability and use of VRS, not cutting back. You should adopt a rate that encourages continuing improvements in VRS technology and continues to improve services levels. Recent developments in VRS are a good example of how the service can be improved, such as enhanced 911 services, 10-digit numbering, a larger and better-trained pool of interpreters and better videophones with an array of enhanced features. Monthly payments for broadband are a big expense for many deaf people, and instead of trying to cut back on VRS, you should be exploring ways to make VRS over broadband more affordable to deaf individuals.

"Progress towards functional equivalence will be destroyed if the FCC does not encourage VRS providers to improve VRS and make it more widely available. VRS is a recent and dramatic advancement that benefits those who are deaf, their families and communities, and so much more can be done. It would be tragic if the FCC were to destroy this broadband service that is so vital to the Deaf.

"Recent reports of fraud in the VRS industry are disturbing to us who use Sorenson Video Relay Service, a company that has operated within current FCC guidelines and has worked to maintain the integrity of the VRS fund. The FCC must devote more of its time and energy to focusing on the elimination of fraud, not VRS.

"I urge you to establish a fair and predictable rate for VRS that will encourage VRS providers to invest in improving VRS and reaching more deaf individuals. The law requires it and it is the right thing to do."

Sincerely, Sandra K. Rule